M.A. in Education - Early Intervention in Autism & Sensory Impairments

In fall 2011, Lindenwood University began offering a new Master of Arts degree in Education for the early intervention field. This new program provides early childhood professionals training to partner with parents of young children who have learning needs in the areas of autism and/or sensory impairments.

All candidates will complete a study of family-centered practices, characteristics of autism spectrum disorder, as well as visual impairment and deaf/hard of hearing impairment before selecting a strand of specialization in one of the three aforementioned areas.

Potential candidates for this program include General & Special Education Teachers, Parents, Speech & Language Pathologists, Occupational & Physical Therapists, Early Childhood or Child Development Teachers, VI Teachers & Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Sign Language Professionals, Social Workers, Counselors, Psychology Examiners, and those who have a B.A./B.S. degree and/or work experience in early childhood or special education.

LU-Belleville News
by Christy Magnusen, Ph.D.

Lindenwood University-Belleville mirrors the St. Charles campus is so many ways. This includes the new M.A. in Education program with an emphasis in Early Interventions in Autism and Sensory Impairments (Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Visual Impairments). During the fall semester, 2011, Lindenwood–Belleville unveiled the first of two courses in the series for this exciting program: EDS 560 – “Introduction to Family Centered Practices” and EDS 561 - “Characteristics of Young Children with Autism.” One of the highlights of the intellectual inquiry that took place in both of
these classes this semester in Belleville was a stellar guest speaker. Offering a moving characterization of having two young children with autism, this speaker captivated both classes with her heartfelt memories, her wisdom about children with autism, and her promise for hope as she related her journey of parenting two children with disabilities.

Course offerings will definitely continue at both campuses for this innovative program. If you are a pre-service teacher or a teacher or serve in another school personnel capacity and are interested in expanding your expertise in this fascinating area, please take advantage of this program. The Lindenwood Program in Early Interventions is endorsed by Dr. John Mantovani, M.D., of St. John’s Mercy Hospital in St. Louis, and Dr. Gary Mesibov, Ph.D., University of North Carolina (former Director of the TEACCH Program). For more information, please contact Christy Magnusen, Ph.D. – LU–Belleville at (618) 239-6095 or via email at cmagnusen@lindenwood.edu.

Introduction to Family-Centered Practices

Students in the Introduction to Family-Centered Practices class learned about the latest options for infants and toddlers who have hearing impairments when Moog Center Executive Director Betsy Brooks and audiologist Val Sonneveldt spoke on October 3. The use of hearing aids and the latest technology on cochlear implant devices were discussed. Criteria were shared for the use of implants for toddlers as young as one year of age. The class watched videos of babies as young as nine months prior to receiving a cochlear implant who then shared their graduation speeches from pre-school and kindergarten. The stories were inspiring and made a strong impression on the importance of giving parents all the information regarding hearing and language development in order to make qualified decisions for their children.

Maria, Bev, and Paul Fields and their extended family joined the Family-Centered Practices St. Charles class on Oct. 11. They shared the importance of early intervention specialists working as a team with parents to empower them
and to build strong relationships with those who are involved in their child's life. Maria's family and extended family of support staff taught us what they have learned to promote Maria's independence. Bev Fields serves as a member of the Early Intervention Advisory Council.

Early intervention specialists frequently discuss the issue of feeding babies and toddlers as an area of concern. On Tuesday, November 8, from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., Sheree Behrndt, owner of Sensory Solutions, will be addressing the topic of sensory needs and feeding in very young children to Dr. Panagos' Early Interventions class. All members of the Early Interventions Advisory Council are invited to attend. Please RSVP to Dr. Rebecca Panagos at rpanagos@lindenwood.edu. The Sensory Solutions Website: http://sensorysolutions.org

You can see a report on Sensory Solutions on KMOV’s Website by going to Great Day St. Louis News Segment:

http://www.kmov.com/great-day-st-louis/Picky-Eaters-132084438.html
Dr. Mantovani is a local Pediatric Neurologist at Mercy Hospital who helps families of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders put their world back together again. Over his 27 years of practicing, he has seen between 25,000 and 30,000 children, “Half a stadium full,” he says.

Lindenwood University is honored to welcome Dr. Mantovani to our Introduction to Family Centered Practices & Characteristics of Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder Classes on Nov. 15.

To learn more about Dr. Mantovani and his work in the St. Louis area, read a great article in St. Louis Magazine (August 2011 issue) titled “Untangling the Brain” by Jeannette Cooperman. Here is an excerpt from that article:

“By communicating from your mind to theirs, using words or gestures, you can create a bridge,” Mantovani says. “When you start early and work intensively with a young child, you can actually build neurobiological connections in the child’s brain.”

We look forward to learning more about the neurobiological differences in individuals with autism.

To learn more about the M.A. in Education – Early Intervention in Autism & Sensory Impairment program, please contact either Dr. Rebecca Panagos (rpanagos@lindenwood.edu) or Dr. Christy Magnusen (cmagnusen@lindenwood.edu) or Graduate Assistant Rachel Morgan (rmorgan@lindenwood.edu).